

# An Auchterarder Manuscript of 1843

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About the Disruption in its wider aspects many millions of words must have been written, but attention has tended to be upon the great issues of principle involved and, with the notable exception of Dr Thomas Brown's classic *Annals of the Disruption*, there does not appear to be a great deal of published material showing what was going on locally while the great issues were being debated in General Assembly, Court of Session and House of Lords.

This paper is concerned with the local situation in the small country town of Auchterarder and is based, in the main, upon a manuscript notebook which reposed for many years in the safe of the session house of what is now St Andrew's and West Church before being handed in to the Scottish Record Office.<sup>1</sup>

The MS is a quarto-sized notebook in board covers which records the doings of those in Auchterarder who had non-intrusionist and Free Church sympathies in the fourteen months from 2nd January 1843 to 2nd March 1844. When the first entry in the book was made, the Disruption was yet to come although it was by then almost a certainty that it would take place. When the last entry was made the Free Church people of Auchterarder had both a church and a minister of their own. A great deal of the story of how this came about is revealed in this note-book.

Auchterarder stands apart from most other parishes of the time in that it had no minister either to lead its people out from the Establishment or to seek to keep them within it. It had had a vacancy that by 1843 had lasted for nine years, during which time the Presbytery had striven faithfully to see that the spiritual needs of the parish were not neglected. Much credit is also due to four men who were elders at the time of the death of the Rev. Charles Stewart on 31st August 1834 and who continued to serve throughout the vacancy. Their names appear on the opening page of the MS notebook, heading the list of those who declared their intention of supporting the break with the Establishment; they played a leading part in the building of the new church, and they formed the kirk session of the Auchterarder congregation of the "Free Protesting Church of Scotland" after the Disruption had taken place.<sup>2</sup>.

These men were David Millar, George McLaurin, Andrew Morison and William Thomson. Their names are always given

<sup>1</sup> S[cottish] R[ecord] O[ffice], CH3/705/17.

<sup>2</sup> SRO, CH3/705/1, Auchterarder Free Church Kirk Session Minutes for 10th June and 9th July, 1843.

in this order, and that it is the order of seniority is confirmed by reference to the census returns of 1841.<sup>3</sup> (A fifth elder, James Bennet, alive in 1834, had died before the Disruption took place.<sup>4</sup>)

On 2nd January 1843 a meeting of those connected with the congregation of Auchterarder made the following declaration, using a form of words common to other Free Church groups:

Inasmuch as many faithful Ministers of the Church of Scotland are now making application to the Legislature to have the Church, Office-bearers and people of Scotland secured in that liberty which is essential to a scriptural connection with the state, and have resolved in the event of their application not being complied with to resign the Benefits of the Establishment we, the undersigned, connected with the congregation, approve of that Resolution, and while we deprecate, and would desire to avert so calamitous a result, are prepared to adheare to, and stand by, the body of Ministers who may be obliged to take that step, in the hope and expectation that, by the Blessing of God notwithstanding the loss of the Temporalities now enjoyed, the benefits of a stated Evangelical Ministry will be secured to the people of Scotland.

In the MS notebook this declaration is on the first page, where it is headed "Copy", and after the declaration the names of all the signatories have been reproduced.

Books similar to the Auchterarder notebook are to be found elsewhere, but those I have so far been able to trace are much less detailed. In the Scottish Record Office there is a deacons' court minute book from Prestonpans Free Church (to which Dr Bulloch kindly drew my attention) but for the period from 12th May 1843 to 30th December 1844 it contains only some nine entries.<sup>5</sup> Within the Presbytery of Auchterarder a similar book comes from Monzie,<sup>6</sup> bearing the date 18th January 1843, and containing the signatures of those adhering to the Free Church cause. Men and women over the age of sixteen were to sign, and after their names was to be entered their "designation", by which was meant either their address or their occupation. There are 418 signatures, the great majority being of working people. In this book the Declaration itself is *printed*, with careful instructions for its use given also in print on the inside front cover and the date of publication noted as 21st December 1842. By contrast the Auchterarder book simply has the Declaration written out in long-hand.

<sup>3</sup> Registrar-General's Office: 1841 Census: Enumerators' Schedules. 329/6, 329/7, 329/8, and 329/4.

<sup>4</sup> SRO, CH2/20/10, Parish of Auchterarder: Register of Mortality.

<sup>5</sup> SRO, CH3/267/3.

<sup>6</sup> SRO, CH3/567/5.

Returning to the signatures in the Auchterarder MS, the names of the four elders mentioned are followed by those of James Brugh of Cloan, a heritor, and Alexander Brock, a merchant. The next five names are also followed by the occupations of the persons concerned, respectively "weaver", "shoemaker", "cabinet maker", "tailor" and "miller". After that only names are given, perhaps because the copyist realised how long it would take to include such full designations in every case. In all there are 657 names, including those of both men and women. As at Monzie there was considerable working-class support and to this point we shall return.

The next entry in the notebook is headed

FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN SCOTLAND  
MINUTE BOOK  
1843. 2 January

and there follows an account of a public meeting of the parishioners of Auchterarder, called by requisition, to consider "the Resolutions of the Convocation lately held in Edinburgh. Those present unanimously expressed agreement with them".<sup>7</sup> A Committee of thirty, all male, was then appointed "to watch over the interests of the Parish". The usual four names head the list, and the fifth is that of James Brough who is named as chairman.

At a further meeting held in the parish church on 27th February, three resolutions were unanimously adopted:

1. That this meeting instruct the Committee for to take immediate steps to Raise funds either by weekly subscriptions or otherwise for the advancement of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.
2. That this Meeting instruct the Committee to look out a site for a New Church and obtain plans and specifications, for the erection of the same.
3. That this Meeting give power to the Committee to look out for a piece of ground to Build the Church upon, but to make no settlement before calling a Meeting of the Congregation and laying the mater [sic] before them for their approval and likewise that this meeting add to the Committee.

It will be noted that in spite of the long vacancy, which must have made the parishioners of Auchterarder long for a settled ministry, their fund-raising was not to have any narrow end in view but was to be "for the advancement of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland".

On 4th March, which was a Saturday, the Committee met in the session house: Mr Millar produced the books for weekly

<sup>7</sup> For the text of these resolutions, see the Appendix p. 39.

collections and these were distributed amongst the forty collectors, including both men and women. At the same time a sub-committee was appointed to look out for a suitable site for the church, to report in a week's time when the collectors' books were also to be brought in.

The committee met as intended on 11th March, under the chairmanship of Mr Brough of Cloan, when it was found that £4 16s. 10d. had been collected. This sum included "some donations besides quarterly and monthly subscriptions"; and it is recorded that "the meeting were much delighted with the first week's progress". The difficulty encountered in many parts of Scotland of finding a site for the Free Church, because of the opposition of landowners who sympathised with the Establishment,<sup>8</sup> does not seem to have occurred at Auchterarder. The sub-committee on sites reported on three possibilities.

One site was on ground offered by Mr Christie "in what is commonly called the Abbey Corn Yard". The cost would be £1 per feu if three feus were taken, but 15s. per feu if the whole piece of ground consisting of eight feus was required. Mr McEwan's ground, "situated above Mr Millar's Wynd" was offered for £75, plus £1 9s. 6d. yearly. The original of Mr McEwan's letter is preserved pasted on to the inside cover of a common-place book which belongs to a present-day citizen of Auchterarder. While the letter has been much folded, and is worn into a hole in the centre so that two or three words are missing, it is quite decipherable and reads as follows:

To the President of the Church Committee Auchter.

Sir,

At your request I now inform you what  
I will take for that Feu Belonging to me  
and as I am aware of the depresed  
State of Property at Present I will let it go  
upon the lowest terms if you find it to  
Answer your d<esires. You > may have it for  
Seventy Five < Pounds Sterlin>g.

Extent of the Feu is 1369 Square Yards  
Feu Duty £1. 9s. 6d.

Andrew McEwan for Campbell McEwan.

Auchterarder.

March 11th 1843.

The additional information which this original of Mr McEwan's letter gives us is the size of the feu offered, and we shall consider this presently. The third offer was from Mr Robert

<sup>8</sup> T. Brown, *Annals of the Disruption*, (Edinburgh, 1893), chap. 23.

Monteath, who resided at Gask, but his answer was not definite and accordingly Mr William Thomson was asked to obtain a clearer statement from him.

It is further recorded that "the Committee were unanimously of opinion that the prices asked were above value and were enjoined to treat with the Proprietors and report" on 1st April. When that day came (it was again a Saturday) it was reported that Mr Monteath had offered a spot of ground "of rather more than two feus at the price of One Guinea per Feu and gave his written obligation with Miss Monteath's consent to this effect".

Although the minute does not say so, it would appear from subsequent events that the Committee was satisfied with this last offer. What is recorded at this meeting is that when the subscription books were handed in the sum raised was £6 11s. 2d. making a total to date of £11 8s. 0d., "which was ordered to be transmitted to the Treasurer of the Free Presbyterian Church, Edinburgh".

The Committee met on the four subsequent Saturdays of April; learned that a receipt had been received from Archibald Bonnar, treasurer to the Free Church; arranged to distribute through the Collectors 200 "Communications"; and was informed that the monthly total collected was £8 12s. 11d. This was lodged with the treasurer "who paid therefrom 11/- to William Stewart for Services done to the Committee".

At the last meeting in April recommendations from the "Provincial Committee" (meaning surely "Provisional" Committee) were considered, and it was

unanimously resolved that the Collecting of donations should commence on the 1st week of May, and that the whole families and communicants in the parish be waited upon by the several members of the Committee now appointed to the different districts and ascertain what may be raised to-wards the general building fund and report finaly on the 13th May next.

One week later, however, on 6th May, the Committee had disappointing news in the form of a letter from Mr Robert Monteath requesting the annulment of the bargain into which he had entered in granting two feus for a church. It was understood that he was willing to pay £15 10s. as compensation for going back on his undertaking. A deputation of two was appointed to wait upon Mr Monteath and relieve him of his bargain; they were to seek £20 in compensation but were empowered to accept a lower sum, though not less than £15 10s., since "no less sum can be received as compensation for the injury received". This minute would suggest either a very deep disappointment on the part of the Committee or else that, along

with staunch adherence to Christian principles, they had at the same time highly developed business instincts. At any rate a meeting was called by special notice on the following Tuesday, at which it was intimated that a settlement had been reached with Mr Monteath and that the sum to be paid in compensation was £15 10s.

The Committee then appointed Mr David Millar, Senior, to wait upon Mr Campbell McEwan, and Mr James Clement to wait upon Mr James Christie, to ascertain their lowest offers and obtain an option on their pieces of ground until Wednesday 17th instant. Mr James Clement and Mr William Wilson apparently had a third suggestion to offer and they were instructed to give information about it when the other two reports were made "on Saturday first at seven o'clock".

The entry for 13th May is one of the most interesting in the book, for it lists subscription papers received for the building fund, setting out in columns the names of subscribers and the amounts offered in money or in kind or in terms of labour.

The total in money was given at £253 12s. 11d., which included £8 1s. 11d. from the monthly collections taken up to 29th April (after deduction of the 11s. due to Mr Stewart) and the £15 10s. of compensation from Mr Monteath. Forty-two loads of lime and slates were offered, 21 days' work by horse, and 24½ days of labouring work. This last entry does not apparently mean that 24 men and a boy had offered their personal labour, but that four men of some substance had offered the services of one of their men for six days each (in one case for six and a half days).

The Committee endeavoured to translate the value of what had been offered into monetary terms as follows:

Indriving lime and slates. 50 carts valued at 6/-	£15
Driving wood from Perth or Stirling	£ 3
Driving stones & 21 days at 4/-	£ 4 4s.
Labourers in days work. 24½ days	£ 1 17s.
Wrights in wright work	£ 4
Materials	£ 2 10s.
Sawers &	£ 0 16s.

This totals £31 7s. which, added to the amount subscribed in money, comes in all to £284 19s. 11d. (There is a small discrepancy here for the minute actually states that "Bringing the value of these several donations into Money the amount may be supposed to be £284 9s. 11d.". It was agreed to report this sum to the Provisional Committee in Edinburgh "as the amount of their donations and Subscriptions at this date".

Reports regarding the building sites were also given to the Committee but as the members had not been given full powers

to act without reference back to a general meeting it was resolved to call a general meeting of the congregation on the following Tuesday (16th May) and to ask for fuller powers.

At this meeting a report on the state of the funds was given and it was unanimously agreed that enlarged powers be given to the Committee authorising them "to conclude a bargin [sic] with the proprietor of any site they may judge most advantagious". The Committee were further instructed not only to obtain a site but to "commence, carry on and complete the building as expeditiously as possible in order that the Congregation may be accommodated with a place of worship". This committee was instructed also "to bring tallanted Ministers or Preachers before the Congregation in order that a suitable person may be chosen as Pastor for the Free Church".

Immediately after the congregational meeting in the church, the Committee itself met in the session house and asked Messrs Millar and Clement to have definite answers from the parties named on 9th May so that they might conclude a bargain at the next meeting — "the ground to be between Milton and Ruthven Street Wynds".

On Saturday 27th May the Committee met to hear the reports by Messrs Millar and Clements and finally to fix on ground for building. At this meeting it was agreed to add to the Committee Mr Wm. Young, Writer. For some reason that is not stated, there was no written report or offer placed before the Committee; but it was agreed "that Mr Brugh of Cloan, Mr Young, Writer, and Mr David Millar be appointed a select Committee to fix on a spot of ground for building". They were given full powers to conclude a bargain "as they shall judge most advantagous for the Free Church", the ground to be obtained either by feu or purchase. Such collectors' books as were available were examined and the weekly contributions are stated to amount to £6 2s. 1d.

There is no mention in this minute of the fact that, since the last meeting of the Committee, the Disruption had taken place in Edinburgh.

At last, on Saturday 3rd June, the Committee, meeting still in the old session house, heard that Messrs Brugh, Millar and Young had acted swiftly and had "purchased the property in Auchterarder belonging to Mr William Fenton, for the site of a Church, at the sum of one hundred and thirty pounds". This was not a piece of vacant ground, for it is stated that £7 4s. was to be paid "as the condition of the tennants removing".

An exact comparison of values is difficult without detailed knowledge of the different sites, but it cannot escape notice that three months earlier £75 plus an annual sum of £1 9s. 6d. had been asked for Mr McEwan's ground and that this was one of the offers which was considered to be "above value". Had the

Committee become more desperate in its desire for a settlement, or had the addition to it of Mr Young brought them to a more realistic appreciation of land costs?

At all events, and for whatever reason, the Committee would seem to have decided against the 1369 square yards offered by Mr McEwan and purchased instead ground immediately to the east of Mr McEwan's property — ground which, at the time of purchase, does not seem to have extended to much more than 750 square yards, i.e. just large enough for the church itself, with a passage of only some three feet in breadth on one side of it. This conclusion is suggested by the terms of the disposition made by William Fenton in favour of the Trustees of the Free Church of Auchterarder which gave the dimensions of the ground as being 58 feet 3 inches in breadth and 110 feet from the road back.

The ground was bounded, it is noted, "on the west by the property of Campbell McEwan, Cooper", and right of entry to the yard behind was secured along the east side of the Church by means of "an entry 3' 3" in breadth . . . to the height of one storey at least", this entry to extend "in such a way as one can turn a cow or handbarrow into the yard hereby disposed".<sup>9</sup>

Mr Millar was then instructed to apply to Messrs Cousin and Gall in Edinburgh for the plan of a church which would contain between eight hundred and nine hundred sittings with a corresponding vestry. The meeting further resolved that "the Free Protestant Church in Auchterarder shall be erected under the special superintendence of Mr David Millar, Junr., who shall be responsible for the whole work with full powers". A committee of six was appointed to assist him in carrying out these duties.

Five months and nine days later the church was opened as a place of worship. In the course of those five months the committee met on fifteen recorded occasions as the work proceeded apace. On 10th June Mr Millar, Snr., proposed that the wood, doors and windows from the houses which had to be taken down should be used, along with wood from his son's stock, to erect a temporary building which would provide shelter until the new church was ready. Several tradesmen having offered gratuitous help with this project, it was readily agreed to.

Mr James McEwan, one of the subscribers mentioned in the minute of 13th May, was appointed to regulate the carriage of stones, lime and slates and "warn out the carts accordingly".

It was reported that "the Relief Congregation had offered the use of their Church for Sabbath first", and "as the protesting ministers have left their own Churches" the meeting

<sup>9</sup> Disposition by Wm. Fenton in favour of the Trustees of the Free Church of Auchterarder, dated 4th April 1846.

unanimously agreed to leave the parish church also. The Rev. J. R. Omund of Monzie was to preach next day and it was agreed that the congregation of the new Free Church of Auchterarder should assemble in the Relief Church; afterwards they would meet "in the wooden house" if it were big enough and, when numbers made it necessary, they would "assemble at the tent in the Green adjoining". It is recorded that "the several tenants were paid their rents and agreed to remove immediately" — that is, they found themselves moving with only about one week's notice!<sup>10</sup>

We may also notice in passing that, in spite of the decision to leave the Established Church, it was still in the session room of the old church that the Committee met a fortnight later. Not until 15th July, in fact, was their meeting place changed to "Mr Sheddan's school".

The sum of 6 10s. was handed in by the collectors on 24th June and at the same meeting it was stated that Mr Brugh of Cloan had offered "sand from his pit without any price, for the new building".

By 1st July Mr Millar was able to report that the wooden house was ready and that the building (of the church) was partially begun. It was accordingly resolved to ask the new presbytery, which was due to meet on Tuesday first, to lay the foundation stone: this was done on Tuesday, 4th July 1843. At the same time Mr David Millar was asked to correspond with the Rev. George Smeaton of Falkland, inviting him to preach at the Sacramental Fast of 19th July. (This was a Wednesday.)

It was estimated that the cost of building the church would be about £500, but this was not considered accurate enough and detailed costings were to be sought from each department, viz. masons, wrights, slaters, plasterers, etc. Mr Young was then appointed convener of a committee of seven which would consider the estimates.

A week later on 8th July, the Committee heard of a "full supply of Carriages" and put Mr James McEwan in charge of this department. It was reported that the masons had offered to complete the building at £2 5s. per rood (with 7d. per foot for hewn stones), but the other estimates were not yet forward. As the masons' charge was judged to be "above the current rate of prices", the matter was referred back to the special committee.

At the meeting on 15th July, the first to be held in Mr Sheddan's school, it was agreed that a congregational meeting should be held "on the 24th current, being the Monday after the Sacrament" in order to decide whether or not they were

<sup>10</sup> The Free Church Session Minute Book bears the date 10th June 1843, and its first minute records a meeting of session on 11th June, with Mr Omund as moderator.

prepared to elect a minister. In preparation for this meeting a communion roll was to be prepared.

Mr Smeaton must have preached with acceptance at the sacramental fast. The meeting on the following Monday decided that it was indeed ready to call a minister and when the committee met on 29th July it was mainly concerned with that rather than with the building of the church. "Messrs Young and Millar reported that they had gone to Edinburgh as appointed where they waited upon Mr Smeaton and informed him of his election to Auchterarder Free Church. They also waited upon W. Dunlop, Dr Candlish, etc. who expressed their delight at Auchterarder being so happily settled." On the financial side, it was stated that £9 14s. 8½d. had been collected; and as regards the building it was agreed, on the motion of William Thomson, "that the fore part of the building, Viz, the Spire, Session House, Staircase etc. be deferred for the present".

There are two minutes for 5th August, one dealing with the estimates and one with the call. Setting down the estimates in a table, for clarity, we find that this was the position:

David Millar for Wood, and for Wright work	£469 4s. 3d.
Mason James Darling and James Richard, "according to the plan and specifications pointed out, and providing hewan and rubble Stones, irrespective of Measurement but as a whole sum for the work as finished	£ 79 6s. 4d.
Plumers and Slaters	£ 23 18s. 0d.
Plasterwork, James McFarline	£ 14 6s. 2d.
making a sum in whole of	£586 14s. 9d.

The general Committee considered that this total was much higher than they had anticipated but as the work was already begun, and as all the contractors were members of the Free Church and "being present adhered to their estimates", it was agreed to accept them. It may be noted that the names of the masons, James Darling and James Richard, appeared on the list of contributors recorded on 13th May; between them these men had offered over £20 in cash, as well as the carriage of several loads of slates, lime and stones, and 12 days of a labourer's time.

Having dealt with the building business, the Committee then moved to the appointment of Mr Smeaton. It heard that commissioners from the presbytery had attended Cupar Presbytery to ask for Mr Smeaton's translation to Auchterarder, but his present congregation of Falkland, where he had been ordained in 1839, had objected. The matter was to come up again at presbytery on 23rd August, and Messrs Maxton, Young and Brugh were

appointed as a deputation to urge the importance of the translation of Mr Smeaton to the Free Church of Auchterarder.

From the pages of the Edinburgh Free Church newspaper, *The Witness*, we learn that at the Free Presbytery of Cupar representations were made by 160 communicants and adherents of Falkland, urging the importance of Mr Smeaton remaining with them. Mr William Young, however, pleaded strongly for his translation to Auchterarder stating that 569 had signed the call: of these 552 were communicants including eighteen heritors and all four elders, while the other seventeen were adherents. Mr Young represented that the new Free Church congregation at Auchterarder was a substantial one, varying from 1200 to 1400 souls; and that there had been tears of joy at the congregational meeting at the prospect of Mr Smeaton's coming. After discussion the Presbytery of Cupar agreed to the translation, with only one dissent being recorded.<sup>11</sup> On 26th August the Free Church Committee at Auchterarder learned of the decision of the Presbytery of Cupar and also that the Free Presbytery of Auchterarder had fixed the induction of Mr Smeaton for Wednesday 6th September.<sup>12</sup>

At that same meeting on 26th August, it was reported that the sum raised by the collectors for the period ending 19th August amounted to £8 19s. 3d. In the following four-week period the amount collected was £8 17s. 9d., and it was agreed on 15th September that since the Free Church at Auchterarder now had a minister all the money raised by the collectors in weekly subscriptions should thereafter be transmitted "to the General Sustentation Fund at Edinburgh". When, a month later, the sum of £8 3s. 6d. was available, it was agreed, however, that the minister's and elder's expenses for the General Assembly in Glasgow the following week be paid from the weekly collections.

On Monday, 23rd October, the Committee met "according to adjournment" at 10 a.m. in Mr Young's office. They tried to ascertain their financial position by balancing donations received, including the money value of work performed, against what was owed, but found this impossible as some donations had not been reported on the one hand, while on the other "the Masons had not brought their extra account". From this last phrase it will be seen that even in those days one could not count on work done costing precisely what had been estimated! The Committee then went on to consider the allocation of seats in the church, and we are told that they were

unanimously agreed that the best method of allocating the seats in the Church was by the amount of donations, that is the highest Subscriber to choose first, the Second Subscriber

<sup>11</sup> *The Witness*, 29th July, 26th August 1843.

<sup>12</sup> SRO, CH3/30/1, Minutes of Free Presbytery of Auchterarder.

the Second choice the third third choice etc. throughout the whole subscribers.

As the church was now nearing completion certain necessary decisions of a practical kind were taken by the Committee on 28th October, one being that the building should be lighted by "Gass", another

that the Pulpit be covered with blue velvet at 2/- per square yard and silk fringes the Precentor's desk with the same Cloath, worsted fringes. The pulpit stair to be carpeted, the front of the Galries to be covered round with the same cloath as the Pulpit worsted fringes. Mr Ferguson to provide the Cloath fringes and Carpet.

The Committee also ordered that the pillars etc. were to be covered with Wainscott paper and the seats to be marked with their number and number of sittings, all to be completed by 10th November.

From Mr Sheddan's school, where they had assembled on 4th November, the Committee adjourned to the church to make a personal inspection of it "in order that they might fix more correctly the several rates of sittings". All who had contributed to the building of the church or who had been members of the Established Church of Auchterarder and came out at the Disruption were to have seats, with priority of choice to contributors. The Minister was to have "the choice of a pew prior to the general allocation", and sufficient space was to be kept in the pews fronting the pulpit "for persons dull of hearing irrespective of their Subscriptions at the discretion of the Committee". The collectors were to have the right of choosing seats "immediately after the three pound Subscribers".

The gallery had (and still has) three rows of seats and it was agreed that for the front range of seats the charge should be 7s. per sitting for the year, for the second range 5s., and for the third range 4s., payable half-yearly in advance with the money to be applied to the cost of the new building. The area of the church was likewise carefully defined in sections with a differential rate of seat rent according to position, though mention is made of the fact that "the Seats in the center or body of the Church north of the east and west passage are all convertible into Communion Seats and are consequently general property on Communion Sabbaths". Adherents from other congregations and parishes were to be let sittings from what was left, even although they were not subscribers. The sub-letting of sittings was expressly forbidden.

The Committee then inspected the list of subscribers and, having concluded that "a good number of Members and adherents of the Congregation have subscribed very inadequately considering their means and circumstances", resolved that unless

in the first year these persons subscribed adequately it should be in the power of the elders and managers "to dispose of the sittings that may now be allocated to them".

The modern mind does not take kindly to the idea of seat-rents, but one must concede that it was not at all unfair that those who put most into the provision of a place of worship should have first choice of sittings, with safe-guards for those in special need of one kind or another. Particular consideration was to be given to "such members as shall appear (to the Elders and Managers) to be from the badness of the times or other causes unable to pay".

A general meeting of the congregation was called, ample notice being given, for Wednesday 8th November at 11 a.m. for the purpose of allocating seats. It might now be thought that a meeting held at such an hour would be convenient to men of means but hardly to those who were wage-earners. In the event, however, 700 sittings were let by the time the meeting closed, and a number of adherents had to be asked to return on the following Saturday when the Committee succeeded in meeting their needs.

At this meeting too, on Saturday 11th November, the sum of £4 6s. 11d. from the collectors' books was handed in, arrangements were made for the special collection which was to be taken the following day, and

the Committee were divided into sections for the purpose of pointing out to Members their several seats and attending otherwise to the Accommodation of the Congregation at the opening of the Church tomorrow.

It was agreed that the name of Mr James Phillips be added to the special committee, and Mr Phillips then presented what was described as "an elegant Baptismal Fount with cloath and towel, as a present from Mrs Phillips and Mrs Ferguson to the Free Church Congregation in Auchterarder".

The new church was ready for use, and was insured against fire with the National Fire Insurance Company for £700.

William Ewing in his *Annals of the Free Church* gives 1845 as the date on which the Free Church at Auchterarder was opened. This is understandable, as the front of the tower bears the date "1845" and the words "Jehovah Jireh". But it is clear from the minutes we have been considering, as also from the date on the east wall of the church, that it was brought into use in 1843, the opening service being held on Sunday 12th November of that year. The session house, upper hall and tower were completed later, however.

By present-day standards, the completion of a church in five months from the date of acquiring the site is good going but it was by no means a record in 1843. In the same area of Perth-

shire and in the same Free Church presbytery, Alexander Campbell, M.P., erected a wooden church at his own expense for the people of Monzie, and the claim has been made by the Rev. Dr Bannerman of Abernyte, son-in-law of the Rev. J. Reid Omund of Monzie, that this was Scotland's first Free Kirk. He expressed this in verse, as follows:

There was biggin o' Kirks frae the east tae the west  
Frae the South to the Shetland Sea:  
But the first of them a' to be opened  
Was the spale Kirk of Monzie.<sup>13</sup>

It was built in three months and opened on 27th August 1843<sup>14</sup> but, even so, it was not the first Free Kirk in Scotland. If we put aside as exceptional "the Brick Kirk" in Castle Terrace, Edinburgh, built by the Free Church in six weeks and leased to Free St George's for the use of Dr Candlish and his congregation who began to worship in it immediately after the Disruption had taken place,<sup>15</sup> the honour of being the first Free Church may well belong to Pilrig in Edinburgh which was opened on Sunday, 13th August.<sup>16</sup>

After the Free Church at Auchterarder was opened, the MS with which we have been dealing contains the minutes of four further meetings, the first of them being held in the church on Saturday evening, 30th December 1843. There was then laid on the table a letter from "William Young, Esq., Writer," accompanied by a tin chest in which was found a set of communion plate, "consisting of Four Silver Cups, Two Flagons, Two Salvers, being a present from Mr Young to the Free Church in Auchterarder". Mr Kenneth Young, W.S., his great-grandson, has let me see a note-book of William Young's which contains *inter alia* a copy of a letter which he wrote to his brother, the Rev. John Young, minister of Bellingham, in January of 1844. In this he refers to a recent visit to Edinburgh during which

I also purchased and presented a set of Communion plate to our Free Church here consisting of Four Silver mounted Cups gold inside — 2 Flagons — 2 Salvers — and tin chest to hold them . . . and our people are all delighted.

It is of interest to note that an advertisement for sets of communion vessels very similar to these had appeared in *The Witness* in July 1843.<sup>17</sup> The same issue carried a recommendation from the Free Church's Building Committee stating that they

<sup>13</sup> See Adam Philip, *Memoir of George Henderson of Monzie* (British Legion Press, 1934).

<sup>14</sup> SRO, CH3/567/1, Monzie Free Church Session Records.

<sup>15</sup> David Maclagan, *St. George's, Edinburgh*, (London, 1876) p. 87.

<sup>16</sup> *The Witness*, 12th August 1843.

<sup>17</sup> *The Witness*, 19th July 1843.

could not recommend the use of "German Silver" but that they did recommend a "superior article of Queen's Metal as advertised".<sup>18</sup> The full set — four cups, two flagons, two bread salvers and tin box, together with a baptismal font (which Auchterarder Free Church did not require as one had already been gifted) — cost £4 5s. 9d. It seems reasonable to suppose that it was a set of communion vessels, as advertised in *The Witness*, which Mr William Young presented to his church: they are still in use and well deserve the committee's commendation of "the richness of the material and the beauty of the workmanship".

The meeting of 30th December also decided to direct the clerk to pay £25 to Mr Smeaton but as they had only £13 14s. in hand it was agreed that Mr James Clement should make up the balance, presumably out of the money raised by the collectors.

At the first meeting in the New Year, held on 8th January 1844, the special building committee's report was presented for the part of the work performed by Mr David Millar "under his estimate and extra account". They had measured the seats and found that they extended to 1199 lineal feet on the plan, but as 46 feet of seat-backs had not been executed, only 1153 feet of seat-backs were available in the church. Allowance had been made in the account for the amount of seat-backs not provided and the Committee "having measured the seat-backs in continuation" resolved that they "would upon the whole recommend to approve of Mr Millar's account". The gross amount was £501 18s. 9d., less a deduction of £23 6s. 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. leaving a balance of £478 11s. 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. Certain cash payments had already been made, leaving £200 still due. When the total of £478 11s. 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. is compared with the estimate given on 10th June, of £469 4s. 3d., for "Wood and Wright work", and when it is noted that the final account was not only "per estimate" but also included Mr Millar's "Extra Account", the Auchterarder Free Church would seem to have been well served by its senior elder, Mr Millar, and his son.<sup>19</sup>

The masons' estimate and "extra account" were then examined and the total came to £121 14s. 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. The minute then reads: "There is a ballance still due at this date after deducting Cash payments of £13 13s. 5d." The account was approved. The masons' final total is considerably above the sum of £79 6s. 4d. quoted on 10th June but, without information about what was included in the "extra account", we cannot draw conclusions about whether it was reasonable or unreasonable.

Unfortunately the congregation had not funds to meet these accounts, nor the cost of lighting the church with gas, nor to pay the plumbers or architects. (The Committee were either unaware,

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> David Millar, Sr., was 80 when the 1841 Census was taken; his son David was 40: see Enumerator's Schedule, 329/7.

or did not wish to avail themselves, of the grant of 5s. per sitting which they could have claimed from the Free Church Building Committee in Edinburgh.<sup>20</sup>) A sub-committee of eight, headed by Mr Brugh, was therefore authorised "to open a Cash Credit with the Central Bank here for these purposes". At the same time Mr Young was asked to prepare a conveyance of the property on which the church was built to these gentlemen, which I take to mean that they were to become trustees of the property and to seek credit facilities from the bank on the security of it.

On 3rd February 1844 the collectors' books for the preceding month brought in £6 13s. 7d. "besides other quarterly payments". A month later the amount collected is not stated but, as the March payment finished the year, those books which were "awanting" were to be called in by 9th March, with the arrears of donations for the building fund, and also arrears for seat rents due last Martinmas. Mr Young meanwhile intimated the gift from Mrs Campbell or Kirkland of 27 yards of linen, and 14 yards each from two other ladies, "for the purpose of covering the Communion Tables, Side Table, and Bread Salvers".

On 2nd March, the last date covered by our MS, two further gifts were mentioned. One was from Mr Phillips who had already gifted a font and now presented a "valuable and seasonable gift of a dozen of port wine for the Communion Sabbath". The other gift, from Mr John Morrison of Westerton, was of a set of 1000 communion tokens. In each case the Committee was enthusiastic in its response and asked Mr Young to convey its thanks to those concerned.

So ends the MS of what were, in effect, the minutes of a committee of management, by no means self-appointed and insisting on referring back on major matters to general meetings of the congregation.

A kirk session had been meeting for normal session business, and on 25th January 1844 Mr Smeaton told the session of a decision of the Free Church Assembly "to restore to the Free Church the ancient office of Deacons". Accordingly the Auchterarder session unanimously decided that deacons should be elected, and concluded also that additional elders were greatly needed. Nominations followed in due course and on 8th February, the kirk session being met within what is called "the Free Church Manse" (although the manse beside the church had not yet been built), it was agreed that eleven named men should be elected as deacons. It is with no surprise that we find among them the names of Mr Brugh and Mr Young.<sup>21</sup> With the formal appointment of a deacons' court there was, of course, no longer any need for the ad hoc management committee to continue as a separate

<sup>20</sup> *The Witness*, 19th July 1843.

<sup>21</sup> SRO, CH3/705/1, Auchterarder Free Church Kirk Session Minutes, 25th January, 8th February 1844.

entity. It had done its work, and done it speedily and well, and in the doing of it it had received excellent support not only from the named "subscribers" but also from those who were giving by monthly collections.

I would like before closing to draw attention to the social class from which the Free Church in a country district like Auchterarder drew much of its support, and to comment briefly on their standard of giving.

Dr A. A. Maclaren, in his book *Religion and Social Class*,<sup>22</sup> has shown on good evidence that in the fifteen city churches of Aberdeen the Free Church movement was largely a movement of the rising middle class. Auchterarder, as a small country town, would seem to offer a contrast to this; for if, as is natural, the Free Church leadership came from those who were middle-class, they were well supported by many working-class people.

Of the four elders, David Millar was a retired master joiner, running his own business with his son; George McLaurin sets himself down as "Independent"; Andrew Morrison was a farmer, and William Thomson, the session clerk, was a blacksmith.<sup>23</sup> Of the two other local leaders, James Brugh was laird of the small estate of Cloan and William Young was a lawyer.

That these men were supported by many whose occupations would put them into the category of being "working-class" would seem to be established by a document, dated 1840, which a chance contact with Dr George Burnet, formerly minister of Corsock, led him to send to me. Along with some other papers, this document had come down to him from his great-grandfather who was William Thomson, the session clerk at Auchterarder in 1843. It is a four-page printed sheet headed *Address from the parishioners of Auchterarder to their fellow-Christians throughout Scotland* and proceeds to set forth their case against the Earl of Kinnoul, the Rev. Robert Young and the decisions of the civil courts in the famous Auchterarder Case. It was published in February 1840, and signed by 471 males including twenty heritors, four elders (of whom three are themselves heritors), 410 communicants and forty other parishioners. What concerns us at the moment is that the majority are working people.

Of 258 whose occupations are given, no fewer than 107 are described as weavers. The next largest groups are the farmers (18), wrights (16), labourers (14), shoemakers (12), servants (11), masons (10). Twenty-seven other occupations are mentioned including two merchants and one teacher who are signatories. No occupations are attached to a further 72 names, but simply their place of residence, "Smithyhaugh", a small hamlet two-and-a-half miles east of Auchterarder. This group, judging from

<sup>22</sup> A. A. Maclaren, *Religion and Social Class: The Disruption Years in Aberdeen*, (London, 1974).

<sup>23</sup> 1841 Census: Enumerators' Schedules, 329/6, 329/7, 329/4, 329/8.

their places of residence alone, would be in the category "working-class".

At Monzie, the book referred to on page 23 above, as similar to the one we have been considering in this paper, records the names of 418 supporters of the Free Church, and gives the occupations of 94 of them: they include 23 labourers, 17 farmers, 10 masons, 9 wrights or joiners, 7 shoemakers, 5 weavers, 5 tailors, 4 servants, 4 ploughmen, 3 millars, 2 each of saddlers, shepherds and smiths, 1 vintner and 1 church-officer. There is a fair mixture here but working-class support is well represented.<sup>24</sup>

In Monzie the people were fortunate in having their Free Church built for them.<sup>25</sup> At Auchterarder it had to be built by the new congregation's own efforts and contributions. What we may call the "named subscribers" were reckoned, in the minute of 13th May, to have given £261 8s. Since there were 22 of them, this gives an average contribution of £11 17s. 8d., although it would hardly be the whole of their givings. But these "named subscribers" were supported by several hundred others, many of whom, as we have seen, were working people. Our manuscript minute-book records eleven monthly totals (out of a twelve-month period) brought in by the collectors, which add up to £79 8s. 8d. over 48 weeks; that is an average of £1 13s. 1d., or 397 pence per week. If no more than Dr Chalmers' "penny-a-week" standard was being followed, this would (in round figures) suggest regular giving by some 400 homes, although no great claim for exactness can be made here. What is certain is that the labourer's wage in 1843 amounted to 9s. per week<sup>26</sup> for a six-day week, while the *New Statistical Account* of the parish, written in 1837, gives 14s. per week as the wage for carpenters and masons.<sup>27</sup> With wage rates like this, as much as one penny per week is generous giving, the equivalent of almost one per cent of a labourer's income.

We are surely justified in claiming that in Auchterarder the Free Church enjoyed considerable working-class support and that, generous as were the "named subscribers", the bulk of the congregation was more generous still in relation to the smallness of the wages most of them were receiving in the early 1840s.

## APPENDIX

Resolutions passed unanimously by a Public Meeting of the Parishioners of Auchterarder, held on 2nd January 1843.

1. That while this Meeting cordially and unfeignedly recognise

<sup>24</sup> SRO, CH3/567/5.

<sup>25</sup> See above, page 35.

<sup>26</sup> See above, page 27, where 24½ days of labour is reckoned as being worth £1 17s.

<sup>27</sup> *New Statistical Account* (Edinburgh, 1845), x; parish of Auchterarder (account written by Rev. James Aitken).

the duty of implicit obedience to the civil courts, in all matters [sic] civil, and recognise the absolute sovereignty of the state, under its responsibility to God, to prescribe the conditions on which it will establish or Maintain the Church of Christ, they are fully persuaded that the conditions held forth in the recent decisions of the Court of Session, and the House of Lords, as these of the Establishment in Scotland, are subversive of the freedom essential to a Christian Church, in a great degree destructive of its usefulness, and utterly repugnant to the constitution hitherto understood to have been secured by statute and solemn treaty to the Church of Scotland as by Law Established.

## 2nd Resolution.

That however highly appreciating the great advantage of an Establishment, we cannot put them in competition with the liberties and spiritual constitution of the Church, that accordingly, we cordially concur in and highly approve of, the Resolutions adopted by the late Convocation of Ministers held in Edinburgh, wharby they express their determination to sacrifice temporal benefits and immunities now enjoyed by them, should they fail to obtain from the Legislature, that redress which they have declared to be essential to their remaining in connection with the state, and that we, as Members in Communion, are resolved in the event of their being compeled to separate therefrom, to stand by and adheare to them in a Free Presbyterian Church.

